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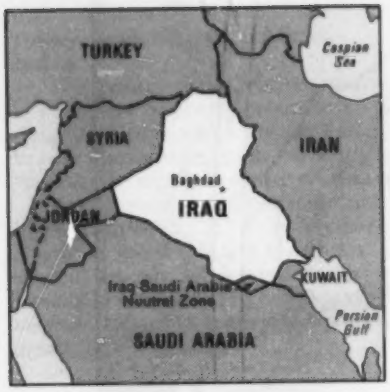
Iraq

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

August 1982



Official Name:
Republic of Iraq

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Iraqi(s). **Population** (1981 est.): 14 million. **Annual growth rate:** 3.3%. **Ethnic groups:** Arab (75%), Kurd (15%–20%). **Religions:** Shi'a Muslim (55%); Sunni Muslim (40%), Christian (5%). **Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian. **Education:** *Compulsory*—through age 10. *Literacy*—70%. **Health:** *Infant mortality rate*—25/1,000. *Life expectancy*—56.1 yrs.

Geography

Area: 434,924 sq. km. (167,924 sq. mi.); about the size of California. **Cities:** *Capital*—Baghdad (pop. 3.8 million). *Other cities*—Basra, Mosel, Kirkuk. **Terrain:** Alluvial plains, mountains, and desert. **Climate:** Mostly hot and dry.

Government

Type: Ruling council. **Independence:** 1932. **Interim constitution:** 1970.

Branches: *Executive*—Revolutionary Command Council (RCC); president and Council of Ministers appointed by RCC. *Legislative*—National Assembly of 250 members elected for first time in 1980. *Judicial*—Civil, religious, and special courts.

Administrative subdivisions: 18 provinces.

Political parties: Ba'ath Party dominates; Kurdish Democratic Party and Kurdish Revolutionary Party are only other legal parties. **Suffrage:** Universal adult.

Central government economic development budget (1981 est.): $23 billion.

National holidays: Anniversaries of the 1958 and 1968 revolutions are celebrated July 14 and July 17. Various additional official and religious holidays.

Flag: Three horizontal bands of red, white, and black, with three green stars on center white band.

Economy

GNP (1979 est.): $31 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1979 est.): 18%. **Per capita income:** $2,410. **Avg. inflation rate** (1981 est.): 30%.

Natural resources: Oil, natural gas, phosphates, sulfur.

Agriculture (less than 10% of GNP): Wheat, barley, rice, cotton, dates, poultry.

Industries: Petroleum, petrochemicals, textiles, cement.

Trade (1981): *Exports*—$11 billion: crude oil, dates. *Major markets*—Western Europe, Brazil, Japan. *Imports*—$19 billion: construction equipment, machinery, motor vehicles, agricultural commodities. *Major suppliers*—Japan, Western Europe, US.

Official exchange rate (floats with US$): 0.294 Iraqi dinar = US$1; 1 dinar = US$3.40.

Membership in international organizations: UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Nonaligned Movement, Islamic Conference Organization, Arab League, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), INTELSAT.

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Almost 75% of Iraq's population live in the flat, alluvial plain stretching from north of Baghdad past Basra to the Persian Gulf. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which irrigate the area, carry about 70 million cubic meters of silt annually to the delta. The legendary locale of the Garden of Eden, the region also contains the ruins of Ur, Babylon, and other ancient cities.

The mountains in the northeast are an extension of the Alpine system that runs southeast through the Balkans, the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey, northern Iraq, and Iran, and into Afganistan, finally ending in the Himalayas.

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PEOPLE

Iraq's two largest ethnic groups are Arabs and Kurds. Other distinctive groups are Assyrians, Turkomans, Iranians, Lurs, and Armenians.

Iraq is the only Arab country in which the majority of Muslims are members of the Shi'a sect. There are also small communities of Christians, Jews, Bahais, Mandaeans, and Yezidis. Most Kurds are Muslim but differ from their Arab neighbors in language, dress, and customs.

Arabic is most commonly spoken, although Kurdish is spoken in the northern, Kurdish areas. English is the most commonly spoken Western language.

GEOGRAPHY

Iraq is bordered by Kuwait, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

The country slopes from mountains 3,000 meters (10,000 ft.) above sea level along the border with Iran and Turkey to reed-matted marshes in the southeast. Much of the land is desert or wasteland.

Average temperatures range from higher than 48°C (120°F) in July and August to below freezing in January. Most of the rainfall occurs from December through April and averages between 10 and 18 centimeters (4–7 in.) annually.

HISTORY

Once known as Mesopotamia, Iraq has been the site of a number of flourishing civilizations, including the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Parthian cultures. Following the Muslim conquest in the seventh century A.D., the Abassid caliphate established its capital in the eighth century at Baghdad, which became a famous center of learning and the arts. By 1638, Baghdad had become a frontier outpost of the Ottoman Empire.

Iraq became a British-mandated territory at the end of World War I and was declared independent in 1932. The country was ruled as a constitutional monarchy by the Hashemite family, which also ruled in Jordan. Iraq was a founding member of the Arab League in 1945 and joined the United Nations the same year. The Baghdad Pact, which grouped Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, was headquartered in the Iraqi capital.

Hashemite rule was ended by the army-led revolution of July 14, 1958, during which King Faysal II and Prime Minister Nuri as-Said were killed. General Abdul Karim Qasim, leader of one of the revolutionary military units, took power. Qasim ended Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact (later reconstituted as the Central Treaty Organization—CENTO) in 1959. Qasim was assassinated in a February 1963 coup, in which the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party (Ba'ath Party) took power under the leadership of Gen. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as prime minister and Col. Abdul Salam Arif as nominal president.

Nine months later, the Ba'ath government was ousted in a coup led by Abdul Salam Arif. In April 1966, Arif was killed in a plane crash and was succeeded by his brother, Gen. Abdul Rahman Mohammed Arif. On July 17, 1968, a group of Ba'ath Party leaders and elements of the armed forces overthrew the Arif regime and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr became president of Iraq and chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). In July 1979, Bakr resigned and his chosen successor, Saddam Hussein, assumed both the presidency and the chairmanship of the RCC.

Iraq's longstanding border dispute with Iran escalated to a full-scale military conflict in September 1980. Iraq's armed forces occupied territory in the Iranian province of Khuzestan and captured the port of Khorramshahr. Iraq claimed that these actions were justified by Iran's failure to honor its obligations under a 1975 treaty and Iranian interference in internal Iraqi affairs. As a result of the fighting, Iraq's gulf ports and oil terminals were closed. Although Iraq offered to accept a cease-fire and begin peace negotiations, Iran refused to consider these proposals as long as Iraqi troops remained on Iranian soil. Iraq withdrew its forces from Iran in June 1982; in July, Iran invaded Iraq near Basra. The resultant battles, though some of the fiercest and largest since World War II, were inconclusive.

GOVERNMENT

In June 1982, President Saddam Hussein streamlined the ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) to nine members, who enact legislation by decree. The Ba'ath Party has ruled Iraq through the RCC since 1968. The RCC's president (chief of state and supreme commander of the armed forces) is elected by a two-thirds majority of the RCC. A Council of Ministers (cabinet), appointed by the RCC, has administrative and some legislative responsibilities.

A 250-member National Assembly was elected on June 20, 1980, in the first elections since the end of the monarchy. Iraq is divided into 18 provinces, each headed by a governor with extensive administrative powers.

Iraq's judicial system is based on the French model, as introduced during the Ottoman rule. Iraq has three types of lower courts—civil, religious, and special. Special courts, established in 1965 to try cases affecting national security, have been used with increasing frequency. Appellants convicted in a special court of the first instance have recourse to the military supreme court. An appellate court system and the court of cassation (court of last recourse) complete the judicial structure.

Principal Government Officials

President, Chairman of the RCC—Saddam Hussein
Vice Chairman of the RCC—Izzat Ibrahim
First Deputy Prime Minister—Taya Yassin Ramadan

Principal Ministers

Foreign Affairs—Sa'adoun Hammadi
Defense—Adnan Khairallah Talfah
Finance—Thamir Razzuqi
Interior—Sa'adoun Shakir
Trade and Commerce—Hasan Ali
Oil—Qasim Ahmad Taqi
Transportation—Abdul Jabbor Abdulrahim al-Assadi
Light Industry (established June 1982)—Tariq Hamad al-Abdullah
Industry and Minerals—Subhi Yassin Khudayer
Planning—Samal Majid Faraj
Agriculture—Siddiq Abdul-Latif Younis

Ambassador to the United Nations—Riyad Mahmoud Sami al-Qaiyssi
Chief, Iraqi Interests Section, Washington, D.C.—Zuhair M.A. al-Omar

READING LIST

These titles are provided as a general indication of material published on Iraq. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

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POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Ba'ath Party controls the government. Although two Kurdish parties nominally participate in a coalition government, their political activities are carefully circumscribed by the Ba'athis.

Opposition groups are not tolerated by the Iraqi regime. The Communist Party was removed from the coalition and declared illegal in 1979. Since then, its activities have been conducted primarily in exile. The outlawed Da'wa (Islamic Call) Party, which seeks to establish an Islamic republic in Iraq similar to that of Iran, bore the brunt of the regime's suppression of rival political parties in 1980.

A large-scale rebellion by elements of the Kurdish population against the Ba'ath government ended in 1975. The Iraq-Iran conflict resulted in the renewal of limited antiregime insurgency in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. The major Kurdish opposition parties are the Kurdish Democratic Party, led by the sons of the late Mustafa Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan of Jalal Talabani. In July 1982, the regime announced an amnesty of political prisoners not convicted of murder or kidnapping foreigners.

ECONOMY

Iraq's oil reserves may be second only to Saudi Arabia's. Petroleum production accounts for almost all export earnings. In 1980, Iraq was the second largest oil producer and exporter in OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries], producing 3.5 million barrels per day (b/d) and consuming only about 200,000 b/d. The Iran-Iraq war resulted in a sharp drop in petroleum exports. After Syria closed its pipeline in April 1982 to support Iran, Iraq's oil exports fell to about one-fifth of prewar levels. Many Iraqi facilities for producing and transporting petroleum had been closed earlier in the war, among them Iraq's badly damaged deep-sea export terminal at the head of the gulf.

The Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a consortium of Western companies that first discovered oil in Iraq in 1927, was nationalized in 1972 after a decade of disputes over concession rights. Following the nationalization, Iraq's trade with the West declined, and oil revenues dropped. Iraq then turned to the U.S.S.R. as a market for its oil and a source of manufactured goods. The IPC agreement of March 1973 resolved the major problems between Iraq and Western oil companies.

After the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973, Iraq announced the nationalization of a portion of the only remaining Western-owned petroleum interest, the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC). Nationalization of the BPC—and thus of all foreign oil interests in Iraq—was completed on December 8, 1975, when the remaining French and British holdings were taken over. Final agreement on compensation for these interests was reached in 1979.

Although the Ba'ath Party makes ultimate policy decisions, the Ministry of Oil determines day-to-day operational and crude oil marketing policies. The Minister of Oil, Kassim Ahmad Taqi, also heads the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC), created in 1964 to operate in areas confiscated from IPC.

Iraq has solicited Western technology to undertake a number of petroleum-related projects. Foreign companies under service contracts are involved in discovery and other technical operations and in construction of new facilities. Recent projects have included refinery expansion, construction of pipelines and storage facilities, and gas-gathering and utilization projects designed to make use of large quantities of petroleum-associated gas, 75% of which is presently flared.

Iraq's oil pricing policy has been generally aggressive, with the government pushing for optimum per-barrel revenues from oil exports. This policy has been tempered, however, by government pragmatism and by a desire to obtain political and strategic benefits. In 1979, Iraq apparently reversed its previously conservative oil production policy by pushing production to near-capacity levels. Until 1979, Iraq had exported only slightly more than was needed to earn foreign exchange to fund its development program. The 1979 production increase allowed Iraq to take advantage of unexpectedly large increases in the international price of crude oil to increase its development program, make more oil available to developing countries, and to accumulate financial reserves.

Iraq's exports declined from $26 billion in 1980 to about $11 billion in 1981. Petroleum and related products accounted for 98%, of which roughly half went to West European countries. Imports in 1981 rose to nearly $19 billion, from about $13 billion in 1980.

Iraq's major sources of imports in 1981 were, in order, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The CEMA [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] countries' share of Iraqi nonmilitary imports dropped from 3.6% in 1980 to 2.5% in 1981. The dollar volume of U.S. trade with Iraq has expanded rapidly in recent years. U.S. exports to Iraq reached $914 million (f.o.b.) in 1981, a 26% increase over 1980; in 1980, they increased 64% over 1979.

From 1973 until the Iran-Iraq war erupted in late 1980, rising world oil prices sustained expansion in Iraq's gross national product. Since 1980, the war has drained a large share of decreased petroleum revenues, but Iraq is striving to maintain its investments in such key infrastructure projects as

power and electricity, transportation, and construction. Throughout the 1970s, the government worked toward improving the standard of living by concentrating on education, health, and welfare reforms. Continued emphasis on these areas, as well as postwar economic reconstruction, is expected through the 1980s. Before the war, expenditures on Iraq's 1981–85 economic development plan were projected to reach as much as $75 billion.

Iraq's large land area and wealth of water resources indicate great agricultural potential. Intensive programs are underway to modernize agriculture, the most important economic sector before the development of the oil industry. Progress has been hindered by problems with salinization of irrigated areas, significant urban migration, and dislocations resulting from land reform programs in the early 1970s and efforts at collectivization.

Although Iraq will continue to be a net food importer for some time, efforts are underway to meet rapidly rising consumer demands and to replace imports. Large modern cattle, dairy, and poultry farms are under construction. The government has permitted the importation of foreign workers to compensate for the reduction of agricultural labor. Beginning in the spring of 1981, the government reversed its earlier policies and abolished the farm collectivization program, allowing a greater role for private enterprise in the agricultural sector. Capital for loans to private farmers is becoming available. Iraq imports wheat, rice, and soybean products in large quantities and is a major exporter of dates.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

A major factor in Iraq's foreign policy has been the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iraq considers itself in a technical state of war with Israel and traditionally has opposed all attempts to reach a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Arab states. During the October war of 1973, Iraq sent substantial numbers of troops and quantities of equipment to Syria. Iraq mounted an intensive diplomatic offensive against Israel in the United Nations and other international fora following the June 1981 Israeli air attack that destroyed the nuclear reactor under construction in Tuwaitha, Iraq.

Iraq's relations within the Arab world have varied greatly. Egypt broke relations with Iraq following Iraqi criticism of President Anwar Sadat's 1977 peace initiatives. The following year, Iraq hosted an Arab League summit in Baghdad that condemned Sadat for entering into peace negotiations with Israel and successfully isolated Egypt in the Arab world. Since Iraq's reverses in its war with Iran, however, its relations with Egypt have improved markedly.

Relations with Syria have been marred by traditional political rivalries, disputes over the waters of the Euphrates River, oil transit fees, and differences in the countries' stances toward Israel. Relations with Syria and Libya were set back by their support for Iran during the conflict with Iraq.

Iraq's relations with Jordan have improved in recent years, particularly after King Hussein of Jordan declared his country's support for Iraq in the confrontation with Iran. Relations with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Arab gulf states also have improved, although Iraq and Kuwait have not settled an old border dispute. While the Arab gulf states did not publicly support Iraq in the Iraq-Iran conflict, they have provided substantial financial assistance and opened their ports to the transshipment of goods destined for Iraq.

Iraq's relations with Iran improved following the March 1975 Algiers agreement that ended the Kurdish rebellion, but relations deteriorated steadily after the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran in 1979. The two countries are likely to continue to view each other as competitors for influence in the gulf even after the fighting has stopped.

Iraq has extensive relations with almost all Communist countries. While still dependent on the Soviet Union and its allies for most of its military supplies, it has sought to diversify its sources in recent years. In April 1972, Iraq and the U.S.S.R. signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Soviet-Iraqi relations are limited, however, by Iraq's intense nationalism and its desire to follow a nonaligned foreign policy.

Relations with Western Europe and Japan are generally good, especially in commerce. Iraq has diplomatic relations with all West European governments. Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany are major trading partners, and France and Italy, among others, have developed military supply relationships.

In 1979, Iraq was elected to assume chairmanship of the Nonaligned Movement and to host a summit of the organization's heads of state at Baghdad in September 1982. The war with Iran may modify these plans, but the Iraqi

TRAVEL NOTES

Climate and clothing—The climate is similar to that of Arizona. Temperatures may exceed 48°C (120°F) in summer. Western clothing, especially shoes, is not readily available. Dress in public should be conservative.

Customs—All foreigners must have a visa. Check requirements with the Indian Embassy, Washington, DC, Iraqi Interests Section. Yellow fever inoculations are required of travelers coming from infected areas. Health requirements change; check latest information.

Health—Baghdad's facilities suffice for uncomplicated medical and surgical problems. Doctors are generally overworked and facilities overcrowded. Baghdad's central water system provides potable water, but do not drink untreated water in the villages and rural areas. Malaria suppressants are recommended.

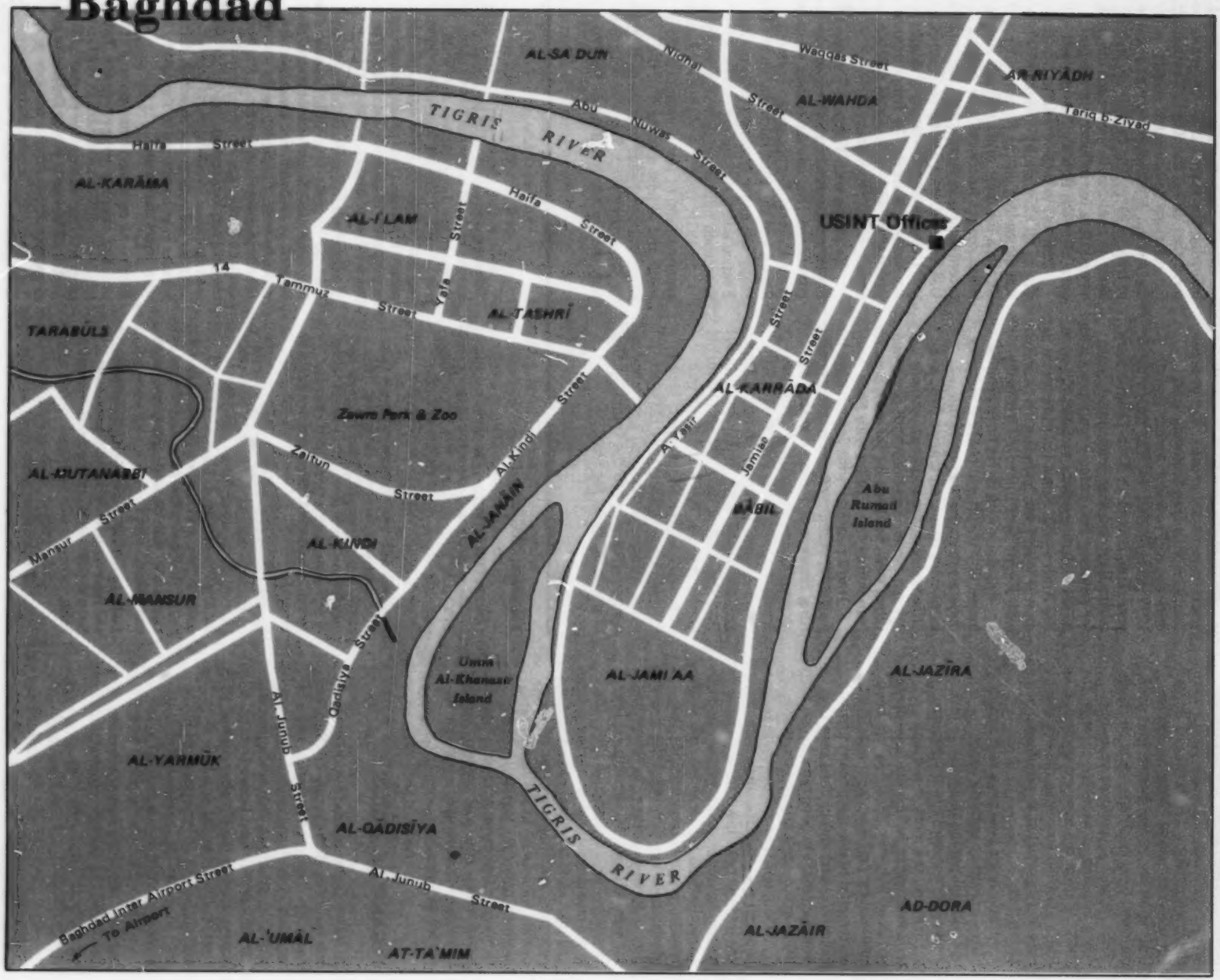
Lodging—Hotel space is extremely limited, and reservations are not always honored. Several new hotels are due to open in late 1982.

Telecommunications—The telephone service has deteriorated under the strains of war and increased use. Long distance calls within Iraq and to the US, Europe, and nearby capitals can still be made, but with difficulty. Telex service is available, but prolonged outages are common. Baghdad is 8 standard time zones ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation—International flights land at Baghdad Airport only at night because of the war. Schedules change without notice. The seaports of Al-Basrah and Umm Qasr are closed because of proximity to the war zone. A railroad connects Al-Basrah to Baghdad and with Turkey and Europe. Buses and taxis provide good local transportation; taxi fares are negotiable. Paved highways connect major cities and neighboring countries. All vehicles must be covered by third-party personal injury insurance.

Media—All communications media are controlled or owned by the government. Two television stations are located in Baghdad but carry few English-language programs. The *Baghdad Observer* is a daily English-language newspaper.

Baghdad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AL-JAZĀIR

Government is looking toward its role in the movement as evidence of Iraq's newly emerged importance in international affairs.

U.S.-IRAQI RELATIONS

At the time of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq broke diplomatic relations with the United States. In 1972, the United States established an interests section in Baghdad under the auspices of the Belgian Embassy. Iraq maintains an interests section at the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Commercial relations are improving. Diplomatically, President Saddam Hussein stated publicly in July 1981 that the U.S. Interests Section would be treated like a diplomatic mission. Formal relations, however, have not been restored.

Principal U.S. Officials

Principal Officer—William L. Eagleton, Jr.
Deputy Principal Officer—Barbara K. Bodine (Theodore Kattouf, July 1983)
Political Officer—Gene M. McGill
Economic Officer—William Monroe
Consular Officer—Robert W. Dry (Frederick Polasky, January 1983)
Administrative Officer—Richard H. Smyth

The U.S. Interests Section is located in the Masbah Quarter, Baghdad, opposite the Foreign Ministry Club (tel. 96138/96139). ■

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